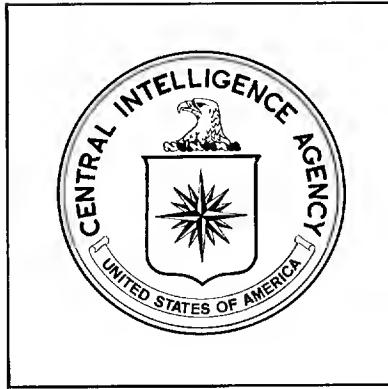


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**Middle East  
Africa  
South Asia**

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Algeria

*Minister of State Dismissed*

Algerian Minister of State Cherif Belkacem, a member of the Council of the Revolution and one of the formerly influential "Oujda group" associated with President Boumediene since the revolution, has been removed from his post, according to a terse government announcement released yesterday. The statement gave no reasons for his dismissal and did not name a replacement.

Belkacem has been out of favor with President Boumediene for nearly a year.

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Boumediene's removal of a former revolutionary associate may have been intended as a warning to other subordinates to fall into line. Last month Boumediene announced his intention to revitalize the National Liberation Front, Algeria's sole political party, and to hold elections for a new national assembly--the first in 13 years--by mid-1976. Boumediene may make further ministerial changes to tighten his reins of authority before trying to use the electoral process to legitimize his government.

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Mauritania - Morocco

*Status of Relations*

Recent public pronouncements of "total solidarity" between Mauritania and Morocco mask a relationship that could more accurately be described as one of suspicion and disdain.

Until recently, Mauritania claimed ownership of the Spanish Sahara as far north as El Aaiun. Mauritanian President Moktar ould Daddah is on record as stating that the "Moorish population" of Mauritania extends into southern Morocco as far north as the Draa River.

Morocco, on the other hand, claims that Mauritania, as a Johnny-come-lately to the Sahara decolonization campaign, had no right to any of the territory unless Rabat chose to be gracious.

Mauritanians and Moroccans differ widely in education and sophistication. Mauritania has a population composed largely of Moors and Black Africans, with the Moors in the majority. Morocco, on the other hand, has a relatively sophisticated population of Berbers and Arabs.

Mauritanians in and out of government view Morocco with suspicion, remembering that Rabat took ten years to recognize Mauritania's independence and then did so only grudgingly. Moroccans, for their part, are confident of their intellectual, political and managerial superiority to Mauritanians. This self-confidence may explain Rabat's public declaration of solidarity with Nouakchott in the Sahara dispute; Morocco apparently feels that, if the region is handed over to the joint control of the two countries, it could engineer a final territorial disposition which would benefit Rabat.

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